

A HISTORY OF INDIAN LITERATURE

MICHEL HULIN

SĀṂKHYA LITERATURE

OTTO HARRASSOWITZ · WIESBADEN

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Michel Hulin

SĀMKHYA LITERATURE

The Sāṃkhya is one of the six classical *darśanas* of Indian philosophical literature. The word *sāṃkhya* is derived from the root *khyā-* which means "counting." The attention of European scholars was, for the first time, focused on this doctrine by H. T. Colebrooke in his definition of the Sāṃkhya as: "a system of philosophy in which precision of reckoning is observed in the enumeration of its principles."¹ Strictly speaking, the Sāṃkhya represents the trend of thought which aims at approaching Reality through an exact and comprehensive enumeration of its constitutive principles or categories (*tattva*). Besides its technical meaning, however, the word was sometimes used in reference to the general idea of "reasoning" or "ratiocination". This is especially true for the period preceding the rise of the so-called classical Sāṃkhya.²

The beginnings of Sāṃkhya speculation cannot be precisely dated, as scattered elements of the doctrine may be traced back to the oldest parts of the Veda itself. Symmetrically, the 'end' of the Sāṃkhya does not coincide with the cessation of its literary production. This is due to the gradual diffusion of Sāṃkhya concepts through practically all other systems. In this way, it continued, for centuries, to exercise an invisible but important influence over them. Still, there are two very important milestones in the long and confused history of that philosophy: Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhyakārikā (c. 4th or 5th century A.D.) and the Sāṃkhyasūtra (c. 14th century A.D.). The Sāṃkhya is the only *darśana* lacking a genuine, ancient *sūtra* text. But the *kārikās* (mnemonic verses) relate to the Sāṃkhya in the same way that the prose *sūtras* relate to the remaining *darśanas*. In other words, they lay down the basic tenets of the doctrine, originating a series of commentaries. As to the *sūtras*, they mark a late and somewhat artificial revival of the doctrine after a long period of relative decline and obscurity.

¹ H. T. COLEBROOKE, On the philosophy of the Hindus. Part I, On the Sāṃkhya system, Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society, I, 1823, p. 20.

² FR. EDGERTON, Beginnings of Indian Philosophy, London, 1965, p. 36, n. 1. Other classical, more mythical explanations of the word *sāṃkhya* in T. G. MAINKAR (ed. and trans.), Sāṃkhya-Kārikā of Īśvarakṛṣṇa (Poona Oriental Series, IX, 1964), p. 2—4 and P. CHAKRAVARTI, Origin and development of the Sāṃkhya system of thought, Calcutta, 1951, p. 1—3. (See also H. JACOBI, in Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen 1895, p. 209; 1919, p. 28).

Therefore, the whole history of Sāṃkhya literature can be roughly divided into three periods: 1) the pre-Sāṃkhya speculations starting with the Vedic hymns until the beginning of the Christian era; 2) the classical period dominated by the Sāṃkhyakārikā and their commentaries, and 3) the late Sāṃkhya, as found in the Sāṃkhyaśūtra and related texts.

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* *

Throughout the Vedic period, from the speculative hymns of the Ṛgveda and Atharvaveda up to the Brāhmaṇas and the earliest Upaniṣads (Bṛhadāraṇyaka-U., Chāndogya-U. etc.), the Sāṃkhya never emerges as a coherent philosophy. Even its name is not known. Nevertheless, a number of concepts and trends of speculation begin to appear which will later be incorporated into the final form of the doctrine. In the ancient texts, the fundamental dualism of classical Sāṃkhya — that between *puruṣa*, “Spirit,” and *prakṛti*, “Nature” — is foreshadowed in many ways: as Being and not-Being (*sat* and *asat*), order and chaos, One and Multiple, light and darkness, male and female etc. This dualism may even be interpreted as being implicit in the famous and obscure Ṛgveda hymn (X. 129, 3–5):

“Darkness there was, hidden by darkness, in the beginning; an undistinguished ocean was this All. What generative principle was enveloped by emptiness — by the might of (its own) fervour That One was born.

Desire arose then in the beginning, which was the first seed of thought. The (causal) connection (*bandhu*) of the existent the sages found in the non-existent, searching with devotion in their hearts.

Straight across was stretched the (dividing-)cord of them (i. e. of the following); below (what) was there? Seed-bearers (male forces) there were, strengths (female forces) there were; (female) innate power below, (male) impellent force above.”³

The notion of *puruṣa*, in its philosophical sense, begins to evolve during that period. True, in many contexts, *puruṣa* simply means empirical man. But, in a variety of contexts, it can be defined as man’s essence. In Ṛgveda X. 90, *puruṣa* is the Cosmic Male or Person out of whose body, once sacrifically dismembered, all things in the living and inanimate world are produced. Here again, he has a female counter-part, *virāj*, “the Shining One.” He is supposed to be born out of her and she out of him (v. 5). In addition, the Atharvaveda seems to have at some places a tendency to conceive him as the ultimate root of consciousness and world order: “Therefore one who knows Man (*puruṣa*) thinks, “This is Brahman,” for all deities (*devatā*) are seated in him, as cattle in a cow-stall.”⁴

³ FR. EDGERTON (trans.), Beginnings; see note 3, p. 73.

⁴ Atharvaveda XI. 8, 32. FR. EDGERTON (trans.), Beginnings, op. cit., p. 110.

Moreover, a vague idea can be obtained of the *prakṛti* and its constituents (*guṇa*) from a number of descriptive or cosmological passages. In the Chāndogya-U. for instance, two ideas are clearly set forth; namely the necessity of admitting an ultimate material cause and the triadic quality of creation:

“The existent only, my dear, was this universe in the beginning, one alone, without a second. Now some say: The non-existent only was this universe in the beginning, one alone, without a second; from that non-existent the existent was born. But how could it be so, my dear? said he. How could the existent be born from the non-existent, as they say? On the contrary, the existent only, my dear, was this universe in the beginning . . . It considered: Let me be many, let me propagate myself. It created (or emitted) heat (*tejas*). That heat considered: Let me be many . . . it created water . . . that water considered: Let me be many . . . it created food. This, in very truth, is that which the wise men said . . . whatsoever was said to present itself as seeming red, that they knew was the form of heat. Whatsoever . . . as seeming white . . . of water. Whatsoever . . . as seeming black . . . of food. Whatsoever was said to present itself as seeming undifferentiated (in colour), that they knew was a conglomerate of these same potencies.”⁵

In addition, there is one passage in the Atharvaveda which describes the human body as “the lotus flower of nine doors, covered with three strands.”⁶ It may simply refer to hair, skin and nails (Keith). On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as being a rough sketch of the classical *guṇa*-theory. All the material pertaining to the prehistory of that theory has been gathered and analysed by J. A. B. van Buitenen.⁷ As to the possible origin itself of the tripartition he offers many suggestions, the most interesting of which being perhaps his double reference to the “spatial” triad of sky, atmosphere and earth, and to the “temporal” triad of hot season, monsoon, harvest time.

Lastly, we may consider that the Sāṃkhya, as a philosophical method based on an enumeration of principles (*tattva*), is also anticipated in these ancient texts. The well-known identification of the macrocosm and microcosm offers an ideal framework for such classifications. Attempts to set up correlations between the constitutive elements of man and definite parts of the universe, (as for instance in Taittiriya-U. I. 7, or Bṛhadāraṇyaka-U. II. 5), can be found everywhere. E. H. Johnston went so far as to suggest that, in the famous dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī (Bṛhadāraṇyaka-U. IV. 5, 12), no less than seventeen of the twenty-three “products” of classical Sāṃkhya’s *prakṛti* are already present. These include the five material elements (as sense-objects), the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the *buddhi*

⁵ Chāndogya-U. VI. 1, 2—4; *ibid.*, p. 171sq. The identification of “white” with the *sattva*, of “red” with the *rajas*, and of “black” with the *tamas* will be later confirmed by the unambiguous statement in the Śvetāśvatara-U. IV. 5.

⁶ Atharvaveda X. 8, 43. Trans. A. B. KEITH, Sāṃkhya System (Calcutta and London, 1918), p. 19. See also Atharvaveda X. 2, 31.

⁷ J. A. B. VAN BUITENEN, Studies in Sāṃkhya (III), JAOS 77, 1957, p. 88—94. The author’s own analysis is preceded by a critical review of some earlier interpretations of the *guṇa*-theory (E. Senart and J. Przyluski especially).

(in the form of *viññāna*).⁸ According to J. A. B. van Buitenen,⁹ it is even possible to add an eighteenth element, namely the ego or *ahaṃkāra*, at least in the meaning of "ahaṃ-utterance" or self-formulation of the creative principle (in cosmological passages like *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-U. I. 4, 1*).

Taking into account the sporadic references to *manas* ("mind"), we could be tempted to say that, with the exception of the five *tanmātra* ("subtle elements"), the whole ontology of Sāṃkhya has been already elaborated before the 5th century B. C. This would, however, be a gross exaggeration, as unconnected elements do not yet make up a coherent theory. True, we can extract, from the wide variety of Vedic and upanishadic speculations, those concepts which, after a long process of reinterpretation, would become, centuries later, constitutive parts of the doctrine. But it is only through our knowledge of the mature, self-conscious Sāṃkhya that we are able to do this.

It is between approximately the 4th century B.C. (Kāṭha-U.) and the first century A.D. that the Sāṃkhya doctrine really begins to take shape. Isolated elements are more and more welded together, while a coherent terminology is progressively worked out. Throughout the same period, however, it remains closely associated with Yoga, while at the same time evolving a more and more definite consciousness of its own distinctive features.

It is in the Kāṭha-U. that we find for the first time the notion of a hierarchic scale of the *tattvas*:

"Beyond sense-organs are objects, beyond objects is the *manas* ("mental organ"), beyond the *manas* is the *buddhi* ("intellect"), beyond the *buddhi* is the Great Self (*mahān ātmā*); beyond the Great is the unmanifested, beyond the unmanifested is the *puruṣa*; beyond the *puruṣa* there is nothing; he is the extreme limit, the supreme issue."¹⁰

The series which is presented here is also that of the classical Sāṃkhya. Nevertheless, the *ahaṃkāra* which normally ought to be situated between the *buddhi* and the *manas* seems to be forgotten.¹¹ On the other hand, the *mahān ātmā* is destined to disappear from the classical list. These differences, to a certain extent, can be explained by the yogic context in which the reasoning process seems to be contained.¹² The ascending series of enumeration seems, in effect, to correspond to the successive levels reached by a process of yogic

⁸ E. H. JOHNSTON, *Early Sāṃkhya*, London, 1937, p. 18–21.

⁹ J. A. B. VAN BUITENEN, *Studies in Sāṃkhya* (II), *JAOS* 77, 1957, p. 16–19. See also M. BIARDEAU, *Ahaṃkāra*, *The Ego principle in the Upaniṣad* (Contributions to Indian Sociology, 8, 1965).

¹⁰ Kāṭha-U. III. 10–11. M. BIARDEAU (trans.), *Ahaṃkāra*, op. cit., p. 66; same enumeration in VI. 7–9, except for the sense-objects which are not mentioned and also the *buddhi* which is replaced by *sattva*.

¹¹ The sense-organs are mentioned in III. 3–4 in the chariot metaphor: they are the "horses" driven by the "charioteer" (the *buddhi*), the *manas* playing the role of the reins.

¹² Cf. II. 12, III. 6, V. 1, and especially VI. 10–11.

elevation.¹³ The classical Sāṃkhya, in terms of its ontological, cosmological, and experimental aspects, will become evident from the moment the emphasis is placed upon the inverse order. It is important to note, however, that the Kaṭha-U. seems still to imply a certain type of monist construction. Here the *puruṣa* appears to be one and supreme, beyond individuality. It is not opposed to nature, but rather encompasses nature which is "the indifferen-tiated".

The Śvetāśvatara-U., following shortly after (3rd century B.C. ?), accentuates the tendencies already present in the Kaṭha-U. On the one hand, the *puruṣa* clearly appears to be supreme, transcendent, and identified with Rudra-Śiva (I. 8–10; III. 2; III. 11 etc.). On the other hand, the presence of a yogic context is still more evident than in the Kaṭha-U., for example in II. 8–10. It is not therefore astonishing that the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga be presented as two complementary means to reach the supreme *puruṣa*: "When one knows the God who is the cause of (everything) and who is to be reached through Sāṃkhya-Yoga, one is freed from all bonds."¹⁴

At the same time, we can take notice of a more accurate terminology which is already similar to that of the Sāṃkhyakārikā. The term *prakṛti* and its synonym *pradhāna* appear for the first time in IV. 10 and I. 10 respectively. The *ahaṃkāra* is mentioned in V. 8, the term *guṇa* in V. 7. There is also the most significant passage introducing the idea of an individual *puruṣa* which is capable of being both united with nature and separated from her:

"The one she-goat, red, white, and black,
Produceth many young, like-formed unto her.
The one he-goat in love enjoyeth her,
The other leaveth her whom he hath enjoyed".¹⁵

As for the enigmatic passage I. 4–5, it may allude to other categories and classifications characteristic of the classical Sāṃkhya.¹⁶

The information found in the Śvetāśvatara-U. can be supplemented by that of the Praśna-U. This text enumerates the five organs of action and the five organs of sense in addition to distinguishing for the first time the subtle elements (*mātrā*) from the corresponding gross elements (IV. 7). The more recent

¹³ M. BIARDEAU, *Ahaṃkāra*, op. cit., p. 66 sq.: "At a certain point the yogic process clearly leads beyond the limits of empirical individuality to some kind of experience of the whole; this is probably what is meant by the *mahān ātmā* ... after the experience of the whole, one ascends to mere indifferentiation (*avyakta*, unmanifested) before reaching the supreme *puruṣa*."

¹⁴ Śvetāśvatara-U. VI. 13, M. BIARDEAU (trans.), *ibid*.

¹⁵ Śvetāśvatara-U. IV. 5, A. B. KEITH (trans.), op. cit., p. 11. See also the opening stanza of Vācaspatimiśra's Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī.

¹⁶ According to E. H. JOHNSTON, *Some Sāṃkhya and Yoga conceptions in the Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, JRAS (1930), p. 855–878. See also: La Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad traduite et publiée par A. SILBURN (Paris, 1948), p. 25–30, and for Śvet.-U. 5, 2, where perhaps mention is made of Kapila, the putative founder of the system, p. 68.

Upaniṣads do not provide us with any supplementary details. Their major interest lies in a more precise description of the yogic practice. We should finally mention the Maitrī-U. which attempts to describe the coordinated functioning of the *buddhi*, the *aḥamkāra* and the *manas* (II. 5; III. 2; V. 2; V. 5), as well as the role of the *guṇas*.

However, it is the speculative portions of the *Mahābhārata* (essentially the Mokṣadharma and the Bhagavad-Gītā) which provide us with the richest reference material, enabling us precisely to reconstruct at least some aspects of the development of the Sāṃkhya. Their writing extended over a long period of time, so that the most ancient components stand a fair chance of being contemporaries of some of the younger Upaniṣads (e.g. Maitrī), the more recent components narrowly preceding the Sāṃkhyakārikās themselves.¹⁷ Of course, the conditions under which these texts were drawn up exclude a complete systematisation of the doctrine. Emanating from a multiplicity of authors isolated in time and space, they show many inconsistencies in spite of sporadic efforts to achieve some kind of harmonisation.

"There must have existed scores and scores of more or less isolated little centres where parallel doctrines were being evolved out of a common source. Occasional meetings at pilgrimages and festivals, reports from other and remote *āśramas* brought by wandering ascetics, polemic encounters with other preachers must have resulted in a laborious process of partial renovation and conservation, more precise definitions of doctrines and eclecticism, re-adjustments of terminology, etc. At this stage to credit these little centres with the name "schools" is to do them too much or too little honour . . ."¹⁸

The Mokṣadharma, in particular, has for a long time been considered to be a hopeless entanglement of doctrines. In spite of that, some researchers¹⁹ have succeeded in tracing a certain structure amidst the chaos. J. A. B. van Buitenen, in particular, has pinpointed two distinct theories of origination from nature in the Mokṣadharma. His analysis is too complex to admit of a detailed exposition.²⁰ It is founded on a group of texts probably belonging to the most ancient part of the epic (chapters XII. 187 and XII. 239–240 of the Critical Edition). In these passages two evolutionary patterns would overlap, one being "horizontal," the other "vertical." According to the "horizontal" schema, the *buddhi* is first of all transformed into the *manas*, the *manas* giving birth to

¹⁷ J. DAHLMANN, *Die Sāṃkhya Philosophie nach dem Mahābhārata*, Berlin, 1902. As concerns the dating of the great epic, see L. RENOU, *L'Inde Classique* (II, Paris, 1953), § 803.

¹⁸ J. A. B. VAN BUITENEN, *Studies in Sāṃkhya*, III, p. 101.

¹⁹ In addition to the previously quoted works of Johnston and van Buitenen we should also mention those of E. FRAUWALLNER: *Geschichte der Indischen Philosophie*, I (Salzburg, 1953) and "Untersuchungen zum Mokṣadharma", *WZKM* 32, p. 179–206. An excellent synthesis in G. J. LARSON, *Classical Sāṃkhya* (Delhi, 1969), ch. II.

²⁰ See especially the beginning of *Studies in Sāṃkhya*, II, p. 153–156 ("An old text reconstituted").

the senses and the senses in turn giving birth to the material elements. Such a schema is characterized by the fact that the *guṇa* (more currently known in these passages as *bhāva*) are not inherent "qualities" of the *buddhi* etc. but rather successive stages of a cosmic process of evolution. In the second pattern, the evolution, as its name implies, is vertical; in other words it pertains most importantly to the formation of the psychological and physical attributes of the individual. The ego (*ahaṃkāra*) is situated between the *buddhi* and the *manas* in the evolutionary process, and the totality composed of the Unmanifest (*avyakta*), the *buddhi*, the ego and the five material elements is known as "the eightfold *prakṛti*."²¹ In this instance the *guṇas* appear as psychological or moral qualities belonging to individual beings.

The evident similarities between the vertical evolutionary schema and that of the Kāṭha-U. lead us to believe that this schema has been likewise thought out in a yogic context. As for the horizontal pattern, it may be considered the expression of more theoretical schools of thought. The many confusing and incoherent passages in the Mokṣadharma could be justified by the difficulty in building a synthesis between two so dissimilar systems of thought. It cannot be denied, however, that such a synthesis was actively searched for, and a few passages (perhaps later in origin) actually succeed in giving a rough sketch of the classical schema. For example:

"Eight (productive) material principles (*prakṛti*) are declared, and sixteen modifications too. Now seven are said to be manifest by those who ponder on the super-soul. The Unmanifest, and the Great One, and the I-faculty too; earth, wind, ether, water, and fire as the fifth. These are the eight (productive) material principles. But hear from me the modifications too: (the five sense-organs) hearing, skin, and eye, tongue and nose as the fifth. (Their objects) sound, contact, and form, tastes and odour too; speech, the hands and feet, the anus and the generative organ likewise (the five organs of action). These (sound etc.) are the innate characteristics in the five gross elements. And these (skin etc.) are the organs of perception, together with the innate characteristics (of the gross elements which are their objects). The thought-organ (*manas*) is called the sixteenth (non-productive material principle) by those who think on the course of the super-soul . . . From the Unmanifest the Great Self is produced . . . And from the Great One the I-faculty is produced . . . And from the I-faculty is produced the thought-organ, which is characterized by the qualities of the (gross) elements . . . But from the thought-organ arise the gross elements: . . . Sound, contact, form, taste, and odour too are . . . derived from the (gross) elements according to people who reflect on the elements."²²

²¹ The above list of elements is only the most frequently used throughout the Mokṣadharma. But the variations are numerous: the senses substituted for the material elements; the *manas* taking the place of the *ahaṃkāra*, or of the Unmanifest (as in Bhagavad-Gītā VII. 4); the *puruṣa* substituted for the Unmanifest etc. The list is only fixed in the Sāṃkhyakārikā. Since that time the only *tattvas* deserving the name of *prakṛti* are those which give birth to other *tattvas*, namely the Unmanifest, the *buddhi*, the *ahaṃkāra*, the five subtle elements (the preceding according to the classical schema as presented in *kārikā* 3, cf. infra).

²² Mahābhārata (Critical Edition) XII. 298, 10–20. Trans. by FR. EDGERTON (slightly modified) in Beginnings, p. 323. See also XII. 294, 27–34, *ibid.*, p. 310 sq.

As far as terminology is concerned, the fluctuations remain substantial. Thus the term *prakṛti* is still the most frequently used in the plural form (the eight *prakṛtis*), although the idea of a unique and eternal *prakṛti* begins to be distinguished in passages such as XII. 290–294 or XII. 306, 43 sq. On the other hand, the classical synonyms for *prakṛti*, such as *avyakta* (the unmanifest) and *pradhāna* are frequently encountered. As for the term *guṇa*, its meaning does not yet appear to be clearly defined. In some instances it functions as a quality of *prakṛti*, in others as an aspect of the gross elements and in still others it refers to a “modification” of a particular *tattva*.²³

Representative of this fluctuation is the ambiguity of the term *satva*, still employed in most cases as a synonym of *prakṛti* (or of *buddhi*) but which already appears, in some places, as the first of the three *guṇas*.²⁴ While the classical Sāṃkhya uniquely uses the word *puruṣa* to designate the Spirit, the Mokṣadharma still uses a multiplicity of terms. *Ātman* notably functions as a perfect synonym of *puruṣa* throughout the ensemble of texts.²⁵ Both, however, seem somewhat eclipsed throughout the entire period by the term *kṣetrajña* (“Field-Knower”). The *kṣetrajña* is presented as the Onlooker who surveys the “field” formed by Nature.²⁶ Such linguistic usage seems to testify to a certain consolidation of dualistic tendencies longtime latent in the proto-Sāṃkhya.

One of the most important aspects of the Mokṣadharma is perhaps its distinction between a Sāṃkhya method and a Yoga method. Without doubt, we come across numerous passages affirming the fundamental identity of both.²⁷ However, the very fact that the text insists on unity testifies to a certain consciousness of the difference between the two doctrines and perhaps even of their growing opposition:

“Brahmans who follow Sāṃkhya praise Sāṃkhya, and those who follow Yoga praise Yoga; they declare (each their own) superiority by the means (which they adopt) to magnify their own (respective) parties.

How may the soul be saved? Thus, by the means (they adopt to this end), the wise followers of Yoga declare in clear form their superiority (of method).

And the Sāṃkhya brahmanas declare in clear form this (following) means (for saving the soul). Whosoever, knowing all courses (or methods, ways, or goals) in this world, turns away from the objects of sense . . .

The followers of Yoga rely on immediate (mystic) perception; the followers of Sāṃkhya rest on accepted teaching (i.e. knowledge). And both these opinions I consider true”²⁸.

²³ Cf. textual references in G. J. LARSON, op. cit., p. 121.

²⁴ See A. M. ESNOUL, Les strophes de Sāṃkhya (Paris, 1964), p. XXXIV sq.

²⁵ On the contrary, *bhūtātman* (“elemental Self”) designates only the empirical subject as opposed to the “real” subject (called *adhyātman* or “Overself”); cf. the glossarial index in FR. EDGERTON, Beginnings, p. 339 and 341–342.

²⁶ References in FR. EDGERTON, ibid., p. 350.

²⁷ For instance: XII. 293, 29–30; 295, 42–43; 304, 2–4 etc.

²⁸ Mahābhārata (Critical Edition) XII. 289, 2–4 and 7, FR. EDGERTON (trans.), Beginnings, p. 291.

It is even possible that one of the most characteristic doctrines of the classical Sāṃkhya opposing the Yoga system of Patañjali, namely its "atheism," has already been alluded to here. Everything depends of the meaning of the word *anīśvara* (v. 3). Fr. Edgerton translates it as "soul" but it literally means "he who has no Lord" or "that (*puruṣa*) for whom an *Īśvara* is irrelevant."²⁹ Thus the verse could testify to the scepticism of Yoga-followers in respect to the possibility for atheistic Sāṃkhya followers of gaining access to liberation.

Due to its general orientation (emphasizing the *bhakti* and the dedication to Kṛṣṇa), the celebrated Bhagavad-Gītā throws less light on the development of Sāṃkhya than does the Mokṣadharmā. It describes the Sāṃkhya less as an elaborated doctrine than as "the way of knowledge," distinct from "the way of actions." The text then speaks (chap. III) of a *sāṃkhyayoga* as opposed to a *dhyānayoga* ("yoga of meditation"), or to a *karmayoga* ("yoga of actions"). Moreover, its theistic orientation does not allow a total dualistic affirmation: the *puruṣa* is first of all Kṛṣṇa himself, the "supreme *puruṣa*" ("*puruṣottama*") whose "inferior nature" (assimilated in VII. 14 to *māyā*) is the "eightfold *prakṛti*." However, in chapter XIII and those that follow, the redaction of which has probably taken place in a later period, we come across descriptions of the Sāṃkhya doctrine conforming more to the classical schema.³⁰ The passage XII. 1–5, for instance, gives the "correct" list of the 25 *tattva*, while XIV. 5–21 already presents the *guṇa* in a double role of psychological qualities and constituents of Nature.

S. Das Gupta draws attention³¹ to the existence of still another version of the pre-classical Sāṃkhya. This version seems to have developed alongside with the real "epic Sāṃkhya." Its principal doctrines are exposed for the first time in the so-called Pañcaśikhavākya (Mahābhārata XII. 211–212). This text deals with a particularly refined version of the "vertical pattern," that is to say that the productive process hinges on the *ahamkāra*, while the *guṇas* appear as mere "good and bad qualities of the mind" (Das Gupta). On the other hand, it admits the existence of only 24 *tattvas*, since the *puruṣa* and the *avyakta* have fused into one. In this case the idea is formulated, perhaps for the first time, that everyday experience, dominated by suffering, comes from a certain amalgamation between the consciousness (*ceṭanā*) of the *avyakta-puruṣa* and the various "conglomerations" constituting the body. Finally, the liberation is called *aliṅgāvasthā* ("the state without any characteristic"). These ideas will after some time be taken over and developed in the Śārīrasthāna ("chapter dealing with the body") of the medical treatise known as Caraka-saṃhitā (1st century A.D.?).

²⁹ For Edgerton's attempt to justify his translation, see *ibid.*, n. 1. But G. J. LARSON, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, p. 133–135 quotes a number of texts in favour of the "atheistic interpretation".

³⁰ Cf. E. H. JOHNSTON, *Early Sāṃkhya*, p. 6 sq.

³¹ S. DAS GUPTA, *History of Indian Philosophies* (5 vol. Cambridge, 1922–1955), I, p. 213–217.

The sage Arāḍa, as presented by Āśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*,³² belongs to the same school. Arāḍa, however, coming back to the "normal" number of 25 *tattvas*, does not accept the enigmatic *avyakta-puruṣa* of his predecessors. He also ignores the *guṇas*, which is not to say that he is still unaware of the relevant doctrine—the conclusion reached by A. B. Keith.³³ His classification of the eight psychological factors, which are at the root of wordly existence (*Buddhacarita* XII. 24–32), is also very interesting. On the contrary, his description of four types of meditation, the regular practice of which is supposed to lead, sooner or later, to liberation (XII. 49–56) seems to be borrowed from the Yoga system.³⁴ We should also associate the somewhat confused account of the Sāṃkhya found in the *Maṇimēgalei* (a Tamil poem of an uncertain date) with this school.³⁵

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Before treating the texts representing the classical period of the Sāṃkhya, we should mention the so-called Sāṃkhya teachers. Actually, no known work can be positively attributed to any one of them, although the texts of the classical period never miss an opportunity to refer to their favourite teachers, whose doctrines they claim to sum up or to develop. While some of them seem to be completely mythical, others have probably been former chiefs of various Sāṃkhya schools in the period immediately preceding the Sāṃkhyakārikā.

The canonic list includes 26 names,³⁶ but seven of these sages enjoy a specially high prestige. They are considered to be "spiritual sons of Brahmā" and must be daily invoked by brahmins during the so-called "oblation rite to the sages" (*ṛṣitarpaṇa*).³⁷ They are, according to Gauḍapāda,³⁸ Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Āsuri, Kapila, Voḍhu and Pañcaśikha. The first four are, beyond doubt, mere mythological figures. Kapila is supposed to be the founder of the Sāṃkhya system, but modern scholars are almost unanimous in considering him also a mythological being.

While nothing is known about Voḍhu, Pañcaśikha ought to be a historical person. In addition to the above analysed Pañcaśikhavākya, the numerous

³² See O. STRAUSS, in *Wiener Zs. f. d. Kunde des Morgenlandes* 27 (1913), p. 257; E. H. JOHNSTON, *Early Sāṃkhya*, p. 8–10 and P. CHAKRAVARTI, *Origin and Development . . .*, p. 103–110.

³³ A translation of Arāḍa's philosophical discourse in E. H. JOHNSTON, *Buddhacarita* (Calcutta, 1936), II, p. 167–178.

³⁴ A. B. KEITH, *The Sāṃkhya System*, p. 22 sq. Discussion in P. CHAKRAVARTI, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

³⁵ See A. M. ESNOUL, *Les strophes de Sāṃkhya*, *op. cit.*, p. LIX sq. and S. S. SURYANARAYANA SASTRI, *The Maṇimekalai Account of the Sāṃkhya*, *Journal of Indian History* (Madras), 8, 1929, p. 322–327.

³⁶ Listing in H. D. SHARMA, *The Tattvakaumudī*, (intr.), p. 11. See also, *Mahābhārata* XII. 306, 57–60.

³⁷ R. GARBE, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*, p. 57.

³⁸ *Sāṃkhyakārikābhāṣya*, I.

references to him found in the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* “clearly indicate . . . a teacher emphasizing the yogic dimension of Sāṃkhya-Yoga” (Larson). It may, however, be safer to conclude in favour of the existence of several *Pañcaśikhas*, as, in other parts of the *Mokṣadharma*, quite different and even contradictory doctrines are attributed to that very same person.^{38a}

Other possible historical figures are *Vārṣaganya*, *Vindhyavāsa* and *Devala*. If the evidence concerning these teachers³⁹ is too confused and contradictory to enable us to reconstruct the particular doctrine of each, it at least testifies to the richness and variety of the Sāṃkhya thought in the period immediately preceding the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*.

The *Sāṃkhyakārikās* present themselves as the summary of an earlier, more comprehensive treatise, the *Śaṣṭitantra*. In their own words:

“The subjects which are treated in the seventy verses are, indeed, those of the entire Science of Sixty topics, exclusive of the illustrative tales and omitting also the discussion of rival views”.⁴⁰

The *Śaṣṭitantra* seems to be lost. It is not even sure that it has ever been available in the form of a text, since verbal quotations of it cannot be found in the ancient literature. Its authorship, moreover, has been attributed to a bewildering variety of teachers (*Pañcaśikha*, *Kapila*, *Vārṣaganya* . . .). *Śaṣṭitantra* is possibly “a term for the Sāṃkhya philosophy as a system of sixty principles” (Keith). A rather unenlightening list of these sixty principles or topics is given by *Vācaspatimiśra* in his *Tattvakaumudī*:

“The existence of Nature; its singleness; objectiveness; distinctiveness (of Nature from Spirit); Subordination (of Nature to Spirit); plurality (of Spirits); disjunction (of Spirit from Nature in the end); conjunction (of Spirit and Nature in the beginning); duration; inactivity (of the Spirit); these are the ten radical categories. (In addition to these) are the five kinds of error, nine of contentment, and twenty-eight of disability of the organs; these together with the eight forms of power make up the sixty “topics”.⁴¹

A quite different enumeration is to be found in the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* (XII. 19–30), a *Pāñcarātra* text which should be slightly anterior to the

^{38a} For the fragments see F. E. HALL, *Sāṃkhyasāra*, Preface, for a translation R. GARBE, in *Festgruß R. v. Roth*, Stuttgart 1893, p. 75.

³⁹ All the material evidence has been gathered and analysed by P. CHAKRAVARTI, *Origin and development* . . ., pp. 111–155. For further discussions on Sāṃkhya teachers, see GARBE, *op. cit.*, p. 46–112; A. B. KEITH, *Sāṃkhya System*, p. 38–44; H. D. SHARMA, *The Sāṃkhya teachers*, *Festschrift M. Winternitz* (Leipzig, 1933), p. 225–231 and his introduction to the *Tattvakaumudī*, p. 11–18; T. G. MAINKAR, *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* (intr.), p. 11–20; G. J. LARSON, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, p. 149–156.

⁴⁰ SK 72, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁴¹ STK 72, G. JHA (trans.), *op. cit.*, p. 173 sq. *Vācaspati* is referring to the *Rājavārtika* (a lost commentary on SK, sometimes attributed to the famous king Bhoja). Slightly different list in the *Mātharavṛtti* and in *Paramārtha's* commentary of the Chinese version of the SK (see *infra*). For the *Śaṣṭitantra*, *Kapila* and the *Ahīrbudhnyas.*, see J. GONDA, *Medieval religious literature*, *HIL II, I*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 116; for *Pañcaśikha*, *ibid.*, p. 48; also *Index*, s.v.

Sāṃkhyakārikā. Here the topics are being grouped into thirty-two *prakṛti* ("fundamental principles") and twenty-eight *vikṛti* ("derivative principles"). Both series include entities which do not normally belong to the classical list of the *tattvas*.⁴²

The SK are believed to be the work of a certain Īśvarakṛṣṇa, of whom very little is known. Takakusu's attempt (on the evidence of some Chinese sources) to identify him with the teacher Vindhyavāsa is at present generally rejected. It seems, however, probable that he was a contemporary of this authority, as well as of Vārṣaganya and perhaps Vasubandhu. This would place the time of his literary activity somewhere in the 4th or 5th century A.D. Attempts at dating the text have varied from the 2nd to the 6th century. The terminus ad quem would be the first half of the 6th century, as we are positive that the work has been translated into Chinese by a certain Paramārtha, some time between A.D. 557 and 569.⁴³

The *kārikās* are written in the *ārya* metre. Determining their exact number has led to interminable discussions, since that number varies with the commentaries between sixty-nine and seventy-three. B. G. Tilak went even so far as to reconstitute a *kārikā* which he believed to be missing! These discussions, however, are of lesser interest, since the verses the existence of which is controversial have no bearing on any essential point of the doctrine.⁴⁴ The popularity of the SK can be appreciated from the number of commentaries which have been written about them. Six of these commentaries are known to us. These are: 1) Paramārtha's commentary to the Chinese version of the SK; 2) the Gauḍa-pādabhāṣya; 3) the Mātharavṛtti; 4) the Jayamaṅgalā; 5) the Yuktidīpikā; 6) the Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī.⁴⁵

The Buddhist monk Paramārtha (499–569) is believed to have brought the SK to China in A.D. 546 and translated them into Chinese during the following years (557–569; Takakusu). In spite of its name *Suvarṇasaptati* ("the Gold-Seveny"), this version includes seventy-one verses. It actually does comment on k. 72 (according to the numbering of other commentaries) but drops k. 63. This commentary is very simple. It seems to have been written especially for

⁴² For more detailed discussions of authorship and content of the *Śaṣṭitantra*, see O. SCHRAMER, *Das Śaṣṭitantra*, ZDMG 68 (Leipzig, 1914), p. 101–110; A. B. KEITH, *Sāṃkhya system*, ch. V, p. 59–64; M. HIRIYANNA, *Śaṣṭitantra and Vārṣaganya*, *Journal of Oriental Research*, 3 (Madras, 1929), p. 107–112.

⁴³ J. TAKAKUSU, *La Sāṃkhyakārikā étudiée à la lumière de sa version chinoise*, BEFEO 4 (Hanoi, 1904), p. 3. On Sāṃkhya texts in Tibet see S. CH. VIDYĀBHŪṢAṆA, *Journ. As. Soc. of Bengal* 1907, p. 571.

⁴⁴ Good discussions in T. G. MAINKAR, *op. cit.*, p. 29–32 and H. D. SHARMA, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–23. A list of variant readings is to be found in R. C. PANDEYA (ed.), *Yuktidīpikā* (Delhi, 1967), p. 147–153.

⁴⁵ For a list of existing editions and translations, see the Bibliography. Older translations etc. are mentioned in J. N. FARQUHAR, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, Oxford, 1920, p. 368, and M. WINTERNITZ, *Geschichte der indischen Litteratur*, III, Leipzig 1920, p. 452.

the use of beginners. Its attribution to the great Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu is not serious, but can be explained, to a certain extent, by the fact that Vasubandhu did compose a treatise (the *Paramārthasaptati*) for the purpose of refuting the doctrines of the SK. The major interest of that text lies in the possibility that it gives us to check up on the correctness of later versions of the SK which have been preserved in Sanskrit.

The *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*, a most popular text, is the standard commentary on the SK. It is clearly written, in plain language, without any reference to technicalities. The very fact that it contains no allusion to any other commentary speaks well for its comparatively ancient date. Some critics have been tempted, on the basis of the identity of names, to identify this *Gauḍapāda* with the Vedāntin author of the *Māṇḍūkyakārikā*, but this seems hardly probable. On the other hand, it probably does not constitute the basis for *Paramārtha's* Chinese commentary, as the two works differ too greatly from each other (Keith). The Muslim author Alberuni, in his famous account of Indian civilisation (dated A.D. 1030), mentions a „Gauḍa the anchorite” as an authority on Sāṃkhya philosophy.⁴⁶ It is not quite sure, however, that he is referring to the author of the *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*.

The *Mātharavṛtti* has for a time been regarded as the original of *Paramārtha's* Chinese commentary. This was more particularly the opinion of the scholar who discovered the text, S. K. Belvarkar, an opinion based on the comparison of similar passages in both texts.⁴⁷ However, such an identification is nowadays generally rejected. N. Aiyaswami Sastri⁴⁸ and Umesha Mishra,⁴⁹ in particular, have pointed to the many instances where the two commentaries offer quite different and even contradictory explanations. It is moreover probable that the *Mātharavṛtti* is a very late work. This can be concluded from the fact that it quotes from texts such as the *Hastāmalakastotra* (attributed to Śaṅkara, 8th century A.D.) and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (10th century A.D.). It also shows a Vedantic tinge at places, a characteristic mark of the last period of Sāṃkhya literature. A vexed question concerning the *Mātharavṛtti*, however, is the reference to a text called *Mātharabhāṣya* in the *Anuyogadvarasūtra*, a Jaina work of the fifth century A.D. This has led Aiyaswami Sastri to the somewhat adventurous conclusion that the *Mātharabhāṣya* may be different from the *Mātharavṛtti* and may also constitute the original of *Paramārtha's* Chinese commentary.⁵⁰ Still another possibility is that all three commentators

⁴⁶ E. C. SACHAU (trans.), Alberuni's India (reprint Delhi, 1964), I, p. 132.

⁴⁷ S. K. BELVARKAR, *Mātharavṛtti* and the date of *Īśvarakṛṣṇa*, Bhandarkar Commemoration Volume (Poona, 1917), p. 171–184.

⁴⁸ N. AIYASWAMI SASTRI, *Suvarṇasaptati Śāstra*, Tirupati, 1944.

⁴⁹ UMESHA MISHRA, *Gauḍapādabhāṣya* and *Mātharavṛtti*, Allahabad University Series, 7, 1931, p. 372–386. See also A. B. KEITH, *The Mātharavṛtti*, Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies, 3 (London, 1924), p. 551–554; S. S. SURYANARAYANA, *Māthara* and *Paramārtha*, JRAS (1931), p. 623–639.

⁵⁰ P. CHAKRAVARTI, *Origin and development . . .*, p. 159, points to the existence of a manuscript in a Jaisalmeer library which could perhaps be the *Mātharabhāṣya*.

(Paramārtha, Gauḍapāda and Māṭhara) may have had a common source which is no longer accessible (Keith).

Surprisingly enough, the Jayamaṅgalā may have been written by a Buddhist. This is, at least, the implication of the benedictory stanza at the beginning of the text. On the other hand, the colophon refers to a certain Śaṅkara as being the author. It is, of course, impossible to identify that Śaṅkara with the famous philosopher of the Vedānta. In his introduction to the only existing edition of the Jayamaṅgalā⁵¹ M. M. Gopinatha Kaviraja spared no efforts to prove that it can be attributed to a certain Śaṅkarāya (or Yaśodhara), the author of a well-known commentary on Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra, which also bears the name of Jayamaṅgalā. Such a claim, however, is based on meager evidence and, moreover, there is every reason to believe that the commentary on the Kāmasūtra is posterior to the twelfth century A. D. Now, P. Chakravarti has traced in Vācaspatimiśra's Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī (probably 10th century A.D.) a passage which seems to refer, word by word, to a parallel development in the Jayamaṅgalā.⁵² In any case, these discussions only present a relative interest, since the Jayamaṅgalā is a rather shallow and eclectic commentary.

Much more important is another recently discovered commentary, the Yuktidīpikā.⁵³ According to a colophon at the end of one manuscript, it should be regarded as a work by Vācaspatimiśra. Both Chakravarti and Pandeya, however, agree to reject that attribution. On the other hand, both are inclined to identify the YD with the Rājavārtika, alluded to by Vācaspatimiśra himself (cf. n. 41 supra). The trouble is that *Rāja* may as well refer to a person called Rāja as to a king. Even supposing that it does refer to a king, there is no real reason to attribute the YD to the celebrated philosopher-king Bhoja (11th century A.D.). Thus, the lack of evidence compels us, for all practical purposes, to consider the YD to be an anonymous work.

The dating of the work is another disputed question. Chakravarti is inclined to regard it as a reply, from the Sāṃkhya point of view, to Vasubandhu's Paramārthasaptati. This would tend to place it somewhere in the fifth or sixth century A.D. But the text contains very few hints justifying that supposition. After careful examination of all available evidence (vocabulary, style of exposition, acquaintance with such or such notion, references to this or that author etc.), P. Chakravarti can only conclude that "the YD was written after Dignāga and before Vācaspati . . . , a very wide range of time."⁵⁴

One of the main interests of that text lies in its numerous references to various Sāṃkhya teachers of the past. Once collected and critically studied, these references will certainly help future research to reconstruct the pre-history

⁵¹ H. SHARMA (ed.), Jayamaṅgalā, Calcutta Oriental Series, 19, Delhi, 1926.

⁵² For details of the discussion see P. CHAKRAVARTI, op. cit., p. 167 sq.

⁵³ It has been edited for the first time by P. CHAKRAVARTI, Yuktidīpikā, Calcutta Sanskrit Series, 23, Calcutta, 1938. A new edition by R. C. PANDEYA (Delhi, 1967) improves very much upon Chakravarti's pioneer work.

⁵⁴ P. CHAKRAVARTI, Origin and Development . . . (introduction), p. XVIII.

of the Sāṃkhya with greater precision. One must confess, however, that at the present stage of the research, this abundance of material is often more confusing than really illuminating. Another salient feature of the work is its polemical character. This is practically the only text of classical Sāṃkhya to undertake the task of refuting the views of philosophical opponents. These polemics are especially directed against the Buddhists, and in particular against the "idealism" (*viññaptimātratā*) of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga (e.g. under k. 34).

A peculiarity of the YD is the division of the whole text of the SK into four *prakaraṇas* and eleven *āhnikas*. Some portions of this commentary are still missing, the most important gap being situated between k. 59 and k. 64 (end of tenth and beginning of eleventh *āhnika*). It seems that the author of the YD was well versed in the grammatical tradition, as he profusely quotes from Pāṇini, Patañjali and even Bhartṛhari. In spite of that, his style of exposition remains rather base and unsophisticated:

"The style of the author is archaic and highly polemical. He first of all puts in a nut-shell what he has to say, and then expands the same. In doing so he attacks the view of the opponent who also in his turn re-attacks that of the defendant. In this way attacking, re-attacking and counter-attacking go on continually till the accepted conclusion is reached. This method has sometimes rendered it difficult to trace the place where the version of the opponent begins and that of the defendant ends."⁵⁵

Vācaspatimiśra's Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī, written in very good Sanskrit, has been, for centuries, the most popular all-India advanced "text-book" of the Sāṃkhya philosophy. S. A. Srinivasan, in the introduction to his remarkable critical edition of the STK, evaluates the total number of existent manuscripts and printed editions of the text to be about 500.⁵⁶ The period of Vācaspati's literary activity has for a long time been regarded as fairly well determined. Critics, indeed, were relying on the author's own assertion that he had completed that work "in the year 898." Assuming that the reference was to the *Vikrama-era*, this would correspond to A.D. 841. But some modern researchers⁵⁷ have questioned that identification and have tried to demonstrate that the reference is to the *Śaka-era* (corresponding to A.D. 976). S. A. Srinivasan challenges both of these interpretations, showing that, at the present stage of the research, the only safe conclusion is that "Vācaspatimiśra lived some time after Jayantabhaṭṭa (who completed his *Nyāyamañjarī* towards A.D. 890) and before Udayana whose *Lakṣaṇāvalī* is dated A.D. 890."⁵⁸ In the series of Vācaspati's commentaries the STK ought to be the last but one, coming just before the *Bhāmati*.

⁵⁵ P. CHAKRAVARTI, *Origin and development . . .*, p. 160 sq.

⁵⁶ S. A. SRINIVASAN, *Vacaspatimiśra's Tattvakaumudī*, Hamburg, 1967, p. 2.

⁵⁷ See P. C. BHATTACHARYA, *Date of Vācaspati Miśra and Udayanācārya*, *G. Jha Research Institute Journal* II 4, Allahabad, p. 349–356; P. HACKER, *Jayantabhaṭṭa and Vacaspatimiśra, ihre Zeit und ihre Bedeutung für die Chronologie des Vedānta*, *Festschrift W. Schubring*, Hamburg, 1951, p. 160–170.

⁵⁸ S. A. SRINIVASAN, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

The STK is an extremely useful commentary. True, its "historical" value cannot compare with that of the YD, but its philosophical interest is much greater. Vācaspati was thoroughly conversant with every system of Indian philosophy, orthodox as well as non-orthodox, and it is this encyclopaedic knowledge that he uses to elucidate the most difficult points of the Sāṃkhya doctrine. His style of exposition is lucid, elegant, easy-flowing, although highly technical at times. Another index of its popularity is the number of sub-commentaries which have been written on it, none of which, however, seems to have been edited as yet.⁵⁹

E. Frauwallner has suggested that the influence of the Sāṃkhya system began to decline as early as the seventh century A. D. This hypothesis is grounded on the different manner in which the Buddhist philosopher Dignāga (c. 480—540 A. D.) and his successor Dharmakīrti (c. 610—670) treat the Sāṃkhya, the former vehemently attacking it, the latter manifesting nothing more than indifference towards it.⁶⁰ Be that as it may, the Sāṃkhya still remained a strong force towards the end of the first millenary. The testimony of the Muslim scholar and scientist Alberuni is significant in this respect. For him, the Sāṃkhya (associated with the Yoga) seems to be equivalent to the totality of Indian philosophy. This leaves us thinking that the system was at that time very popular, at least in the provinces with which he has been at some time familiar.

Alberuni had already translated into Arabic a certain "Book Sāṃkhya" to which he refers at various places of his account of Indian philosophy.⁶¹ Between the text quoted by Alberuni and that of Gauḍapāda as well as Paramārtha's Chinese version there exist conspicuous similarities. However, the order he assigns to the *tattvas* is slightly different, and other divergences which concern the conception of the *prakṛti* allow us to suppose that it is possibly not the Gauḍapādashāstra from which he drew his knowledge. According to Takakusu,⁶² perhaps the great "Book Sāṃkhya" was nothing more than the Chinese version of Paramārtha. It is also possible that Alberuni might have

⁵⁹ T. G. MAINKAR, op. cit. (intr., p. 6 sq.) gives the following list: *Tattva-kaumudi-vyākhyā* by Bhārati Yati; *Tattvārṇava* by Rāghavānanda Sarasvatī; *Tattva-candra* by Nārayaṇa Tīrtha; *Kaumudīprabhā* by Svapneśvara; *Sāṃkhya-tattva-vilāsa* by Raghunātha Bhaṭṭācārya; *Sāṃkhya-tattva-vibhākara* by Vamśīdhara. Only the introduction to the Sāṃkhya-tattva-vilāsa has been edited, along with the STK, by Ramesh Candra (Calcutta Sankrit Series, 15, 1935). The *Sāṃkhya-candrikā* by Nārayaṇa Tīrtha (ed. B. TRIPATHI, Benares, 1883) is supposed to be an independent commentary on the SK. In fact, however, it is only "a paraphrase of the *Tattvakaumudi*" (S. A. Srinivasan).

⁶⁰ E. FRAUWALLNER, *Geschichte der Indischen Philosophie*, I, p. 474 sq. We should not forget, however, that Śaṅkara, who is certainly posterior to Dharmakīrti, is another fierce opponent of the Sāṃkhya (cf. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, II, 1, 10—11).

⁶¹ E. SACHAU, *Alberuni's India*, I (Delhi reprint), p. 8, 30, 48, 62, 64, 75, 81, 83, 89, 132.

⁶² J. TAKAKUSU, *La Sāṃkhya Kārikā* . . . , I, p. 26 sq.

used in different places local traditions which he happened to come across during his travels.

Let us finally recall that the famous Sarvadarśanasamgraha ("Summary of all Systems") by Mādhavācārya (14th century A.D.) includes a chapter on Sāṃkhya.⁶³ In spite of frequent references to the *kārikās* themselves, its real source is the STK, which is quoted or paraphrased throughout the chapter.

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The general line of argumentation in the SK is not always completely clear and logical. This may be due to various authors having interpolated some verses of their own into Īśvarakṛṣṇa's original work.⁶⁴ For the sake of interpretation, however, the whole set of the *kārikās* can be divided into the following items: a) the fundamental problem (k. 1–3); b) the means of right knowledge (*pramāṇa*) (k. 4–7); c) the theory of causality (k. 8–11); d) the *guṇas* (k. 12–13); e) the Unmanifested (*avyakta*) (k. 14–16); f) the Spirit (k. 17–19); g) the "union" of Nature and Spirit (k. 20–21); h) the process of creation (k. 22–38); i) the subtle body (k. 39–45); j) positive and negative "dispositions" (*bhāva*) (k. 46–51); k) cosmological descriptions (k. 52–54); l) finality of the process of creation (k. 55–59); m) the process leading to liberation (k. 60–68); n) epilogue (k. 69–72).

"There being (in this world) an impediment caused by the three kinds of pain, (there arises) a desire for inquiry into the means of alleviating them. And if (it be urged that) the enquiry is superfluous on account of (the existence of) obvious means — (we reply that it is) not so: because these (latter) are neither absolute nor final.

The revealed is like the obvious, since it is connected with impurity, decay and inequality. That which is contrary to that is better, proceeding from the right cognition of the Manifested, the Unmanifested and the Cogniser (Spirit)."⁶⁵

The essentials of the Sāṃkhya philosophy are contained in these two verses. From the very beginning, it appears as a "practical" doctrine, emphasizing the primary fact of suffering and the means of escaping it. On the other hand, it is the very embodiment of the Hindu *śaṅkṣin's* ("renouncer") point of view. It does not believe in a possibility of changing the physical world, in order to make it compatible with human happiness. At the same time, it vehemently opposes the sacrificial system of brahmanical orthodoxy:

"If the heavens are to be reached by means of sacrifices in which trees are

⁶³ E. B. COWELL and A. E. GOUGH (trans.), The Sarvadarśanasamgraha, London, 1894, ch. XIV, p. 221–230.

⁶⁴ A. B. KEITH, Sāṃkhya System, p. 85, has suggested that the k. 46–51, which are very loosely related to their immediate context, may represent such a later interpolation. For a different opinion, however, see E. FRAUWALLNER, Geschichte der Indischen Philosophie, I, p. 339–341.

⁶⁵ SK 1 and 2, trans. G. JHA in H. D. SHARMA (ed.), The Tattvakaumudī, p. 2 and 7.

being cut down, animals slaughtered, and a bloody mud produced; by which means, then, will the hells be reached ?”⁶⁶

The only way to final emancipation is the “right cognition,” that is the discriminative knowledge (*viññāna*) of the “Manifested” (the products of Nature as constituting the perceptible world), the “Unmanifested” (the *prakṛti*) and the “Cogniser” (the *puṣa*). This is a definitely intellectual orientation, clearly distinct from the more “body-centred” method of the Yoga system. The third *kārikā* refers to the list of the twenty-five *tattvas*, but this is rather awkward, as it is not yet possible at this early stage of the exposition to make out what the principal *tattvas* and what their order of production may signify.

The *kārikās* 4–7 are devoted to the classical problem of the *pramāṇa* or “means of right knowledge.” As a fundamentally religious philosophy, the Sāṃkhya has nothing very original to say concerning that problem. On the one hand, its “discriminative knowledge” (*viveka*, *viññāna*) appears as a sort of intuitive insight which has nothing to do with empirical knowledge. On the other hand, it is quite normal that the Sāṃkhya, as a system of philosophy, should heavily rely on inference (*anumāna*), since its most fundamental *tattvas* are “unmanifested,” i.e. inaccessible to ordinary perception. In k. 6 we read:

“That imperceptible thing which cannot be known even through that (i.e. inference) is known through trust-worthy Revelation (*āptāgama*).”⁶⁷

Now, what is meant here with *āptāgama* is not quite clear. Gauḍapāda’s commentary refers to cases like the knowledge of Vedic Gods, Mount Meru (a mythical mountain playing the role of *axis mundi*) or the Uttara Kuru (a tribe supposed to be living beyond the Himālaya). One gets the impression that here *āgama* does not designate the Vedic Revelation but more probably the testimony of trustworthy persons (*āpta*), endowed with supernatural seeing powers. Sages like Kapila, Pañcasīkha etc. could very well play that role. On the whole, the references to Vedic scriptures are very scarce in most commentaries on the SK, and that tends to confirm the marginality of the Sāṃkhya system in respect to the orthodox brahmanical tradition.⁶⁸

The next topic taken up in the SK is the theory of causality. The Sāṃkhya system upholds the so-called *satkāryavāda*, i.e. “the doctrine of the (pre)existence of the effect (in the cause).” This theory constitutes the indispensable preliminary to the doctrine of the *prakṛti* as the universal “prime matter.” The *satkāryavāda* is being used to determine the real relation existing between the *prakṛti*, or *mūlaprakṛti* (“primordial Nature”), and its “products.” There is no *ex nihilo* creation in the Sāṃkhya, but only a progressive manifestation of

⁶⁶ This is an anonymous verse which is being quoted in the Māṭharavṛtti under k. 2.

⁶⁷ SK 6b, Trans. G. JHA in H. D. SHARMA (ed.), *The Tattvakaumudī*, p. 35.

⁶⁸ For a detailed analysis of epistemological issues in the Sāṃkhya system, see P. CHAKRAVARTI, *Origin and Development* . . . , p. 171–196 and E. FRAUWALLNER, *Die Erkenntnislehre des klassischen Sāṃkhya-Systems*, WZKSO 2 (1958), p. 84–137.

already existent but "hidden" products. This process of manifestation, in its turn, implies the presence of a "spectator," who is the *puruṣa*. At the same time, it is in keeping with the puranic idea of a periodic "creation" (*sarga*) and "dissolution" (*pralaya*) of the world. The *satkāryavāda* is being proved in the following way:

"Effect subsists even prior to the operation of the cause: for that which does not exist cannot be by any means brought into existence: further, only appropriate materials are selected; every thing is not by every means possible: capable causes produce only that which they are competent to produce: and the effect is not different from the cause.

... In this world there is no production of the non-existent, just as oil cannot be produced from the sands; and since the existent can be produced, therefore, the effect exists prior to production ... in this world, a man selects the material cause (*upādāna*) of that what he desires to have: one desirous of curds selects milk and not water. Therefore the effect exists. And for this reason also: since everything cannot be produced from everything or everywhere. All the things are not produced at all places, just as gold cannot be produced from silver, grass, dust, and sand. So, since everything cannot be produced from everywhere, the effect exists. And on account of this also: since a competent thing produces that which it is competent to produce. In this world, a competent person, a potter, or the competent means like the earth, wheel, a thread of rags, water etc. produce only, from the lump of clay, the jar, which is capable of being produced ... And from this reason also, that the effect is of the nature of the cause: whatever is the nature of the cause, the same is the nature of the effect, just as barley is produced from barley and rice from rice. If the effect were non-existent, then rice could be produced from *kodrava* ("millet"), but it is not so produced, hence the effect exists."⁶⁹

The *guṇa*-theory (k. 12–13) is directly connected with the notion of *satkāryavāda*. Even if we assume that the effect is really identical with the cause, at least one factor must be introduced to account for the "practical" difference of clay and jar, threads and cloth etc. This factor is constituted by the triad of the *guṇas*, the changing repartitions of which, through the innumerable products of Nature, will account for the whole diversity of things.

At the same time, however, the *guṇas* cannot be considered to be purely "objective" constituents of Nature. They all three have a psychological dimension besides their "physical" one. *Sattva* refers to vivacity of mind, clarity of thought, gladness etc. as well as to lightness, transparency etc. *Tamas* means darkness, inertia, but also sluggishness, sullenness, despondency. *Rajas* is movement and activity, storm and passion etc. Moreover, it seems that the prevalence of this or that *guṇa* in a particular object depends upon the mental dispositions of the person approaching that object. That is why it is stated in k. 12 that "they interact with one another." The GBh. gives a picturesque description of this interaction:

"Thus, a beautiful and virtuous woman is a source of delight to all, and she herself is the cause of pain to her co-wives; and again, she produces delusion in

⁶⁹ SK 9 and GBh. 9, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 26 and 29.

the passionate — in this manner *sattva* is the cause of the existence of *rajas* and *tamas*. Again, just as a king, assiduous in protecting his people and punishing the wicked, produces pleasure in the good people, and pain and delusion in the wicked — in this manner *rajas* produces *sattva* and *tamas*. In a similar manner, *tamas* brings about the existence of *sattva* and *rajas* by its own nature of covering; just as the clouds, covering the sky, cause happiness to the world, they urge the farmer to activity by their rain, and produce delusion in the lovers in separation.⁷⁰

Of course, this ambiguity of the *guṇas* can be historically explained as the result of a fusion between the “vertical” pattern of evolution and the “horizontal” one. But it also has a deep philosophical significance. On the one hand, it means that Nature, in its developed states, can never be accounted for without referring to the presence of some *puruṣa* “looking” at it. “Before” creation, nature is only the so-called *guṇasāmyāvasthā* (“the state of the equilibrium of the *guṇas*”), which is equivalent to indifferentiation or chaos. On the other hand, it points to the “natural” condition of the *puruṣa* in whose opinion the *guṇas* really belong to the things themselves, since he is normally unable to apprehend them as projections of his own mental states.

The *kārikās* 14–16 are devoted to the demonstration of the existence of the *prakṛti*. Being conceived as essentially *avyakta*, “not manifested,” it cannot be reached by any type of perception.⁷¹ As everything manifested (*vyakta*) is limited, it is necessary to avoid a *regressus in infinitum* (*anavasthā*), to admit the existence of a unique, infinite cause. This argument bears some resemblance to the famous “cosmological argument” in Christian theology. The *prakṛti* is described as one, eternal, indestructible, and pervasive (*vyāpin*). We should notice that, unlike the Christian God, it does not appear as the ultimate cause of world-order, but merely as an universal, material cause (*upādāna*).

A parallel demonstration of the existence of the *puruṣa* takes place in k. 17. The *puruṣa* is described as the enigmatic witness, whose presence brings unity, order and intelligibility into the chaotic manifoldness of *prakṛti*, although he never himself appears in the world:

“Spirit as distinct from matter exists, since an assemblage of sensible objects is for another’s use; since this other must be the reverse of everything composed of the three constituents; since there must be superintendence and control; since there must be some one to enjoy and since there is the activity for the purpose of liberation.

... The Spirit is subtle like the Unmanifest and now its existence is being proved through inference: the Spirit exists. Why? Because composite objects are meant for the use of another. It is inferred that the composition of *mahat* (= *buddhi*) and the rest is for the sake of the Spirit, for it is non-intelligent, unconscious like a bed. Just as the bed is composed of a bedding, props, cords, a covering cloth of cotton and a pillow and is meant to serve the purpose of another and not of its own. The different parts of the bed ... have no mutual

⁷⁰ GBh. 12, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 40.

⁷¹ Except perhaps by the famous “yogic perception” (*yogipratyakṣa*), which is reputed to bear on everything subtle in the infinity of space and time. But this is nowhere clearly stated.

purpose to serve. So it is inferred that there is a man (*puruṣa*!) who sleeps on the bed, for whom the bed is meant. Similarly, this body, a composite of the five gross elements, is meant for another. There is the Spirit for whom this body, to be enjoyed, is produced, a body that is an aggregate of intellect (*buddhi*) and the rest . . . "Since there must be superintendence and control": just as here a chariot, yoked with horses capable of leaping, galloping and running, functions when controlled by a charioteer, so does the body function when controlled by the Spirit."⁷²

As such, the *puruṣa* is *kevalin* — "isolated," *madhyastha* — "neutral," and *akartā* — "non-agent":

"The Spirit is indifferent like a wandering mendicant. Just as an ascetic is indifferent while the villagers are engaged in tilling and agriculture, so the Spirit is also indifferent while the attributes (*guṇa*) are active."⁷³

The *puruṣa* is not a concrete subjectivity, an empirical self (in spite of the ambiguity of the word *puruṣa* which also designates empirical man), but the mere indescribable "that," in reference to which the manifestation of the world becomes possible. For that reason, he can only be negatively qualified. As G. J. Larson says:

"... since the *mūlaprakṛti* together with its *guṇa* or qualities makes up every thing that is in the manifest world, including both the psychomental and the physical dimensions of the world and man, the *puruṣa* is nothing, or the presence of nothingness in the world. It is a kind of emptiness at the very heart of the world and man, but it is the nothingness or emptiness which reveals being or the world."⁷⁴

On the other hand, the doctrine of the plurality of *puruṣas* is clearly set forth, although it is not easy to see how the multiple *puruṣas*, apart from their association with different bodies, sets of organs etc., can be differentiated from one another:

"The souls (*puruṣa*) are many, since birth, death and the instruments of cognition are allotted severally; since occupations are not simultaneous and at once universal; since the three attributes (*guṇa*) affect severally."⁷⁵

After having considered the *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti* separately, the SK comes to the most important topic of their interplay. On the one hand, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are like fire and water and can never mix with each other. On the other hand, the Sāṃkhya system has to postulate the reality of such an interaction, in order to account for sense-perception and for the obvious fact of suffering. There is no real "conjunction" (*saṃyoga*) of the two, but rather a quasi-conjunction, a sort of apparent spatial proximity or neighbourhood (*pratyāsattā*), a special adjustment (*yogyatā*) which, practically, functions as a

⁷² SK 17 and GBh. 17 in T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 55—56 and 57.

⁷³ GBh. 19, *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ G. J. LARSON, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, p. 217.

⁷⁵ SK 18, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 60.

real union. Due to that proximity, a reciprocal transference of characteristics takes place:

"Thus from this union, the insentient evolute appears as if sentient, and similarly, from the activity, really belonging to the Attributes, the Spirit which is neutral appears as if it were active.

... In its essence the *buddhi* is insentient, being as it is a product of root-matter (*prakṛti*); consequently the cognition which is a function of the *buddhi* is also insentient, just like the jar and such things. Similarly, such other products of *buddhi* also as pleasure and the rest are insentient. The Spirit, however, not being radically affected by pleasure and the rest, is sentient; this Spirit appears as if having the cognition and the pleasure and such other things, by virtue of the image cast there in by the reflection (*pratibimba*) of the cognition and the pleasure which really subsist in *buddhi*. It is in this manner that the Sentient Being (Spirit) comes to be favoured (by *buddhi*). And *buddhi*, as also its cognitions, though in themselves insentient, appear as if sentient by virtue of being reflected in the sentience (of the Spirit)."⁷⁶

Once the union is effective, the *puruṣa* stands no longer aloof. He identifies himself with the *prakṛti*, or with a portion of it which becomes "his" body. From that moment, he gets involved in the activities of that body, and he suffers along with it each time the body receives injuries, is affected by illness or is restrained in its activities. This process clearly anticipates the famous "reciprocal surimposition" (*anyonyādhyaśa*) of self and not-self in Śaṅkara's introduction to his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. Naturally, this is a sort of transcendental mistake on the part of the *puruṣa*, who never ceases to be free (cf. k. 62). He is just unaware of his own freedom. This is the reason for which, paradoxically, he first needs to be united with the *prakṛti*, in order to separate himself from her:

"The association of the two, as of the lame man and the blind man, is for contemplation by the Spirit of Nature and for the release of the Spirit. Creation proceeds from this union. ... Just as one man is lame and the other is blind ... these two, while on a journey and proceeding with great difficulty, were deserted by their friends when all of them were attacked by robbers and, by course of luck, wandered here and there in the forest. By their own movements they met with each other ... Now, this union of theirs, on account of each relying on the words of the other, results for the purpose of going and seeing. The blind man placed the lame man on his shoulders; thus the blind man goes along the road shown by the lame man placed on his shoulders. In a like manner, in the Spirit, there is power to see but no action; and in the Nature, as in the blind man, there is power to act, but no power to contemplate. Again, just as these two, the blind and the lame, will separate from each other, when they will have reached the desired destination, in this manner, the Nature also will cease to act after having secured the liberation of the Spirit, and the Spirit also will reach salvation and abstraction (*kaivalya*) after contemplating the Nature."⁷⁷

This metaphor of the blind and the lame has, of course, only a relative value.

⁷⁶ SK 20, G. JHA (trans.) in H. D. SHARMA, op. cit., p. 89 (Mainkar's translation of k. 20 being somewhat misleading) and STK 5, trans. G. JHA, ibid., p. 20 sq.

⁷⁷ SK 21 and GBh. 21 in T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 65–67.

Nature, being fundamentally unconscious, cannot have its own purposes. That means that the whole process is for the sole benefit of the Spirit.⁷⁸

The *kārikās* 22–38 describe the whole process of the emergence and functioning of the *tattvas*. The first evolute is the *buddhi* (sometimes called *mahat*) which, in its turn, gives birth to the *ahaṃkāra* (ego). Then, the evolution process branches off into two directions, according to the prevalence of the *sattva* or of the *tamas* in the ego (the *rajas* being active in both cases). The predominantly *sattvic* ego (called *vaikṛta*) gives birth to the five organs of sense, the five organs of action (speech, hands, feet, organs of excretion and of generation), and the *manas*, which is both sensitive and active. The predominantly *tamasic* ego (*bhūtādi*) gives birth to the five *tanmātras*, or “subtle elements” (sound, touch, form, taste and smell), from which the five gross elements (respectively ether, air, fire, water, and earth) proceed.

The text also contains a comparatively detailed analysis of the functioning of each *tattva*. The *buddhi*, for instance, is characterised by *adhyavasāya* (“determination” or “ascertainment”), the *ahaṃkāra* by *abhimāna* (self-consciousness” or “ego-conceit”), the *manas* by *saṃkalpa* (“pondering,” “observing” or “synthesizing”). These organs do not function separately but cooperate in the various situations of life. For example:

“In dim-light, a person has at first only a vague perception of a certain object; then, fixing his mind (*manas*) intently, he observes that it is a robber with his drawn bow and arrow levelled at him; then follows the self-consciousness that “the robber is advancing against *me*,” and lastly follows the determination to run away from the place.”⁷⁹

From k. 39 to k. 45 the text deals with the notion of *līṅgaśarīra* or “subtle body.” Almost every soteriological doctrine of India makes use of this notion, in order to give some intelligibility to the process in which the soul is supposed to migrate from one body to another. The subtle body is the vehicle of the acquired dispositions (*saṃskāra*), which are going to give shape to the personality of the new being. The Sāṃkhya conception of the *tattvas* makes it possible to indicate with some precision which elements that subtle body is consisting of. These are eighteen in number (the twenty-three evolutes of *prakṛti* minus the five gross elements).

The spurious group of *kārikā* 46–51 includes a detailed list of “dispositions” (*bhāva*). Their total number is fifty: five varieties of “error” (*viparyaya*), twenty-eight varieties of infirmity (*aśakti*), nine varieties of complacency (*tuṣṭi*) and eight varieties of attainment (*siddhi*). It is certainly not easy to reconcile this classification with the list of eight fundamental dispositions which is given in k. 43 in connection with the theory of the subtle body. We should not forget, however, that these fifty dispositions were already among the sixty topics of the *Śaṣṭitantra* as indicated by Vācaspatimiśra (cf. *supra*, p. 137).

⁷⁸ This will be clearly stated in k. 56, 58 and 60.

⁷⁹ STK 30, G. JHA (trans.) in H. D. SHARMA, op. cit., p. 106.

The *kārikās* 52–54 include elements of “cosmology” (*bhautikasarga*, “elemental” or “gross” creation). Distinctions between gods, men, animals and “immobile beings” (vegetables and minerals), and between lower and higher regions of the world are being explained in terms of differential repartition of the *guṇas*:

“There is predominance of *sattva* in the worlds above: below the creation is full of darkness (*tamas*). In the middle *rajas* dominates. This is so from Brahmā down to a blade of grass. . . . Above, i.e. in the eight regions of the gods, there is the prevalence of *sattva*, the excessiveness or predominance of *sattva*. Of course, even there *rajas* and *tamas* are present. Below, the creation is full of darkness. From animals down to immovable substances, the entire creation is pervaded by *tamas* in excess. Even here *sattva* and *rajas* are present. In the middle, i.e. in human creation, the *rajas* dominates. Even here *sattva* and *tamas* are present; hence men, for the most part, suffer pain. Such is the world from Brahmā to immovable things.”⁸⁰

In 55–59 the text reverts to the topic of the finality of the creation process. The real meaning of the famous “atheism” of the classical Sāṃkhya appears here to be the most precise. In the course of his commentary to k. 57 (“As the insentient milk flows out for the growth of the calf, so does Nature act towards the emancipation of the Spirit”), Vācaspatiśrī states:

“It would not be right to urge that “the flow of the milk being due to the superintending care of God, it does not afford an instance vitiating the general proposition that the actions of insentient things are due to the control of sentient beings.” The activity of every sentient being is always found to be due either to selfishness, or to benevolence. Neither of these is applicable to the case of the creation of the universe, and therefore, it follows that the said creation cannot be due to the action of a sentient agent. Further, God, being the Lord of the universe, has all that He requires and, as such, in creating the world, He can have no selfish motive. Nor can His action be said to be due solely to benevolence or pity; for pity consists in a desire for the removal of others’ pains, but before creation, the Spirits would be without bodies, organs and objects, as such without pain. For the removal of what then would God’s compassion be roused? And if the pain subsequent to creation be held to be the cause of creation, then we should be in the inextricable nooze of “interdependence” (*īaretarāśraya*): creation due to pity, and pity due to creation! and again, if God were moved to creation by pity, then He would create only happy mortals, not mortals with variegated experiences. And if the diversity of men’s experiences be attributed to their past deeds, then what is the necessity of postulating an intelligent controller of such deeds? The mere absence of the control of an intelligent agent would mean (according to the opponent) that the deeds of men could not have any activity, which would mean that their effects, in the shape of men’s bodies, organs and objects could not be produced. And the result of that would be that there would be no pain, so that the removal of pains would be very easy!”⁸¹

The *kārikās* 60–68 deal with the process of discrimination (*viveka*), which ultimately leads to liberation. The only thing the *puruṣa* has to do is to realize

⁸⁰ SK 54 and GBh. 54, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 141 sq.

⁸¹ STK 57, G. JHA (trans.) in H. D. SHARMA, op. cit., p. 155 sq.

that he is absolutely different from whatever is derived from Nature, not only the "gross" body, but all conditioned states of mind, emotions, desires, projects, and even "intellectual" reflexions. The discrimination itself appears as the *buddhi*'s last operation (cf. STK 60). Once it is effective, the *buddhi ipso facto* ceases to function, having fulfilled its task. It merges back into Nature, along with all other products. This is, of course, a private affair. This dissolution takes place "for" (*prati*) a particular *puruṣa*. It should not be confounded with the periodic, universal dissolution (*pralaya*) as pictured in puranic myths. This is set forth by means of one of the comparisons that interrupt the on the whole unpoetical expositions:

"As a dancer, having exhibited herself to the spectators, desists from the dance, so does *prakṛti*, the Primal Nature, desist, having exhibited herself to the Spirit . . .

Nothing, in my opinion, is more bashful than *prakṛti*, the Primal Nature; who once aware of "I have been seen" does not again expose herself to the gaze of the Spirit."⁸²

The type of experience which is dawning in the *puruṣa*, at that time, can hardly be described in words. Therefore, it is only natural that the SK choose to picture it in purely negative terms:

"So, through a repeated study of principles arises that knowledge of the form "neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor do I exist," a knowledge that is pure, that leaves nothing to be known, is free from ignorance and is absolute."⁸³

Once the discrimination is effective, the *puruṣa* is virtually liberated but he still has to remain in life for some time, until the latent tendencies resulting from his previous existences are completely exhausted. At death, he obtains, or more properly recovers, the state of absolute isolation (*kaivalya*):

"Virtue and the rest, having ceased to function as causes, because of the attainment of perfect knowledge, the Spirit remains invested with the body through the force of the past impressions like the potter's wheel that continues to whirl from the effect of the impulse previously given to it.

When *prakṛti*, the Primal Nature, as her object is accomplished, has ceased to be active and when separation from the body has taken place, the Spirit attains deliverance that is both absolute and final."⁸⁴

Henceforth, Nature is for him as good as non-existent while it continues to be associated with the infinite number of *puruṣas* still waiting for liberation.

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The third and last period in the development of Sāṃkhya thought begins approximately at 1300 A.D., and its duration extends over about three centuries. In the general evolution of Indian thought this period is marked by a

⁸² SK 59 and 61, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 150 and 155.

⁸³ SK 64 and GBh. 64, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 159 sq.

⁸⁴ SK 67—68, T. G. MAINKAR (trans.), op. cit., p. 165 and 167.

growing propensity towards syncretism. At that time, the Vedānta, or more particularly a special brand of theistic Vedānta, is progressively gaining the upper hand over all other *darśanas*. These systems are not being destroyed but rather, in the typical way of brahmanical orthodoxy, amalgamated into the leading doctrine. This does not mean that a synthetic all-comprehensive "super-system" is being worked out. Apparently, every *darśana* retains its personality, its own textual tradition, its special terminology etc. But all are being subtly reinterpreted and expanded, in order to fit to the general theistic schema. The Sāṃkhya system does not escape this fate, and that is the reason for which, in spite of an apparent growing sophistication of the doctrine, this third period may be more properly called "the period of decadent Sāṃkhya."

Listing the texts that date back to that period, we first come across a short treatise called *Tattvasamāsa* ("Compendium of all topics"). Max Müller⁸⁵ at the time based his whole interpretation of the Sāṃkhya on that small text for which he claimed a great antiquity. In his opinion, the *Tattvasamāsa* represented a primitive form of Sāṃkhya, much anterior to that expounded in the SK. There is, however, no positive evidence in favour of such an hypothesis. According to Max Müller, the presence in the text of numerous technical terms not elsewhere used is a sign of primitiveness. But the contrary assumption, namely that this points to the lateness of the *Tattvasamāsa*, is much more likely. Moreover, this text is not even mentioned in Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* (14th century), and its existing commentaries⁸⁶ do not seem to date back earlier than the 16th century.

The *Tattvasamāsa* does not contain any continuous line of argumentation. It is nothing more, actually, than a list of technical terms divided into twenty-two (or twenty-five) *sūtras*. A detailed analysis of its contents can be found in A. B. Keith's book.⁸⁷ Alongside of the well-known categories of the classical Sāṃkhya, the text introduces quite unusual categories. Such are, for instance, the five *abhibuddhi*, which are "forms of the activity of the intellect" (Keith), the five *karmayoni*, or "sources of action," the five *karmātman*, which are aspects of the soul as agent (doer of good works, of bad works, of hidden works, of what is reasonable, of that is not reasonable). Both bondage as well as liberation are divided into three kinds etc. A remarkable aspect of the text is its enumeration of the sixty topics of the *Śaṣṭitantra*. All this points to the possibility of the *Tattvasamāsa* containing, in spite of its decidedly late date,

⁸⁵ M. MÜLLER, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1899, 1919, p. 221—229.

⁸⁶ These commentaries are: 1) the *Sarvopakārinī* (anonymous); 2) The *Sāṃkhya-kramadīpikā* (anonymous); 3) the *Tattva-yāthārthyadīpana* by Bhavanāgeśa Dīkṣita (c. 1625); 4) the *Sāṃkhya-tattvavivecana* by Kṣemānanda (18th century ?); 5) the *Tattva-mīmāṃsā* by Kṛṣṇamitra (18th century). They have been edited in a single volume by V. P. DVIVEDIN and D. SASTRI, *Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series*, 50, Benares, 1918—1921.

⁸⁷ A. B. KEITH, *The Sāṃkhya System*, op. cit., p. 90 sq. The 7th chapter of that book is still the best exposition of the later Sāṃkhya.

a considerable number of ancient elements. It could perhaps be regarded as a sort of scholastic reworking of an older Sāṃkhya tradition, which would have been incompletely amalgamated into the "normative" doctrine of the SK and would have continued, for centuries, to exist side by side with the more "classical" tradition.

The Sāṃkhyasūtras are traditionally attributed to the legendary sage Kapila. Actually, they also are a late work. First of all, they frequently refer to some other Sāṃkhya teachers, like Pañcaśikha etc., who are supposed to be disciples of Kapila! Secondly,⁸⁸ they very often quote from the SK. Thirdly, they are not quoted or referred to either by Alberuni (10th century) or by Mādhavācārya (14th century), not to speak of other earlier scholars or commentators. The case of Mādhava is especially significant, since he always refers to the *sūtras* when analysing the doctrines of other orthodox *darśanas*. The most reasonable hypothesis is that these SS were compiled at a time when the inferiority of their system constituted by the absence of genuine *sūtras* was bitterly resented among Sāṃkhya followers.⁸⁹

The work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is by far the longest and gives a general outline of the doctrine. The second deals more particularly with the process of creation as conceived by the Sāṃkhya. The third focuses around the topic of "dispassionateness" (*vairāgya*) as a necessary condition of liberation. The fourth presents a whole series of illustrative tales, examples, parables (*ākhyāyikā*) etc. which are explained or dealt with at greater length in the commentaries.⁹⁰ The fifth is devoted to the refutation of adverse systems. The sixth is a mere recapitulation.

The oldest available commentary to the SS is the Aniruddhavṛtti, which dates back to approximately A.D. 1500. Although not always happy in its interpretations (Garbe), it is a valuable commentary.⁹¹ It seems to be influenced by Vācaspati's Tattva-Kaumudī and shows a marked tendency to play down the "modern" aspects of the SS. The Sāṃkhya-vṛtti-sāra by Vedāntin Mahādeva is a faithful digest of Aniruddha's work, which contains, however, some original remarks.

The most important commentary on the SS is undeniably Vijñānabhikṣu's

⁸⁸ R. GARBE, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*, op. cit., p. 70, observes that the contrary is highly improbable, due to the "complicated *ārya* metre" used in the SK.

⁸⁹ Recent efforts to prove Kapila's authorship as well as the antiquity of the SS do not carry enough weight. See UDAYANA SASTRI, *Antiquity of the Sāṃkhya-sūtra*, Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference, II, Lahore, 1930, p. 855-882 and the refutation by H. D. SHARMA (op. cit., intr., p. 19-22). For a discussion of the dating, see also GARBE, *Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*, p. 95 and WINTERNITZ, op. cit., III, p. 454.

⁹⁰ These texts very often allude to stories which are well known in the epic and puranic tradition.

⁹¹ According to R. GARBE (ed.), *Sāṃkhyasūtravṛtti* (Calcutta, 1888), p. IX. For other editions and translations of the most important texts of later Sāṃkhya, see the Bibliography.

Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya (second half of the 16th century, according to Garbe). It constitutes the indispensable basis of every interpretation of the later Sāṃkhya. In spite of its great popularity, we have no sub-commentaries on that work, but only two abridgments. One is the Laghu-sāṃkhya-vṛtti by Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa (18th century), which is still in manuscript; the other is the Sāṃkhyasāra by Vijñānabhikṣu himself.⁹² Other commentaries, more or less imitating Vijñānabhikṣu's work but of much inferior value, include the Sāṃkhya-tattva-pradīpa⁹³ by Kavirāja Yāti, the Sāṃkhya-tattva-pradīpikā by Bhaṭṭakeśava (unpublished) and the Sāṃkhyataraṅga by Viśveśvaradatta Miśra (unpublished).

As concerns the main doctrines of the system, the SS are contented with introducing a few technical perfections. They, for instance, give more attention to the process in which the union of Nature and Spirit takes place. They try to prove that the *buddhi* constitutes the only possible "place" for that union (I. 99). In II. 35 a famous illustration is being taken over from the Kūrma-Purāṇa, viz. that of the red hibiscus flower being reflected in a nearby crystal. It is used to explain how the *puruṣa* (the light illuminating the crystal) seems to come into contact with the *guṇas* (represented by the red flower reflected in the crystal playing the role of the *buddhi*). The theory of the subtle body is being worked out with much greater precision (III. 9–19). There are attempts to make out what is the real nature of space and time (II. 12) etc.

On the other hand, the SS lay greater stress on what is constituting the original character of the Sāṃkhya. This leads to a criticism of practically all other systems of Indian philosophy. The whole text of the SS is brimming over with polemics. As such, it contrasts very much with the SK, where every kind of polemics was deliberately avoided. The SS, for instance, emphasize that "atheism" which was only hazily sketched out in the SK (if not in their commentaries). Passages like V. 1–10 definitely reject the idea of a personal God; hence the polemics against the sister system of Yoga which admits such an *Īśvara* (I. 92–94). In the same way, the stress laid on the absolute "realism" implied in the notion of the *prakṛti* results in bitter polemizing against the supposed "nihilism" of Madhyamaka Buddhists (I. 43–46). The clearly reasserted doctrine of the plurality of *puruṣas* involves the SS in repeated attacks on the unicity of *ātman* in the Advaita (I. 150–159, VI. 45–47 etc.). The negation of every kind of object-consciousness in the released state (IV. 32) results in the SS violently opposing the Vedāntic notion of liberation as beatitude (*ānanda*). Other polemics are directed against the "materialists" (e.g. V. 129),

⁹² Edited by F. HALL, Bibl. Indica, 54, Calcutta, 1862. Translated by J. DAHL-MANN, Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie, Berlin, 1902.

⁹³ Edited (mistakenly ?) along with the commentaries on the Tattvasamāsa (cf. n. 86) by V. P. DVIVĒDIN etc. Translated by G. D. SASTRI, in The Pandit 9–10, Benares, 1874–76 (incomplete). For a repertory of still other late and unpublished works imitating Vijñānabhikṣu's commentary, see K. H. POTTER, Bibliography of Indian Philosophies, Delhi, 1970, p. 774 sq.

the conception of causality and of categories in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (I. 123, V. 88–89 etc.), the *sphoṭa* of the grammarians etc.

At the same time, however, the SS appear as deeply influenced by the very doctrines on which they are launching their attacks. This is especially true of their relationship to the Vedānta. To begin with, we come across a sort of terminological mimeticism, as when SS IV. 3 repeats Brahmasūtra IV. 1. 1 verbatim, or when SS V. 116 describes emancipation (and also *samādhi* and deep sleep) as *brahmarūpatā* (“Assuming the nature of Brahman”), a typically advaitic formulation. The characterization of inner organs as *upādhi* (“extrinsic limiting conditions”), or of the empirical subject as *jīva* (“the living one”), are other signs of that terminological contamination.

On the other hand, the SS spare no efforts to reconcile their main teachings with the statements of the Veda and Upaniṣad. The scriptural texts, for instance, that speak of the Lord, are explained away as a mere eulogizing of the liberated *puruṣa* (I. 95). Those which are dealing with the oneness of the soul are supposed only to deny a difference of kind (I. 154), or they are regarded as accommodating the weakness of human understanding (V. 63–64).⁹⁴ In the same manner, all statements pointing to the existence of beatitude in the liberated state are treated as mere laudative phrases, the goal of which is to entice dull-minded persons to seek liberation (V. 68).

The SS are also confronted with the typically Vedāntic dilemma of works and (or) knowledge as methods of liberation. While they generally emphasize the self-sufficiency of discriminative insight (I. 82, 85; III. 24 etc.), they seem at places (e.g. III. 35, IV. 21) to admit that the works may have a subordinate and preparatory role. At the same time, they incorporate a multiplicity of yogic elements.⁹⁵ These are, for instance, the importance given to yogic postures and regulation of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) (III. 32–34), or the conception of meditation as leading to dispassionateness and ultimately to liberation (II. 30–31, IV. 14). Still another yogic element is the acceptance of an “extraordinary” (*alaukika*) type of perception, which is not limited by space or time (I. 90–91).⁹⁶

A last remarkable difference from the SK is the reinterpretation of the *puruṣa-prakṛti* relationship in the perspective of the periodic dissolution (*pralaya*) and re-creation (*sarga*) of the world. While, according to the SK, *sarga* and *pralaya* just interfere with the destinies of individual *puruṣas*, an effort is being made in the SS to bring the two types of “history” to the same level.

⁹⁴ A different explanation is given in VI. 51, where the doctrine of non-duality is supposed to have been introduced “in order to incite the passionate to dispassionateness” (*rāginām vairāgyāya*).

⁹⁵ Some SS have been taken over verbatim from the *Yoga-sūtras*, as for instance II. 33 (= *Yoga-sūtra* I. 5) and III. 34 or VI. 24 (= *Yoga-sūtra* II. 46).

⁹⁶ KEITH, op. cit., p. 100, remarks that this is in keeping with the doctrine of *satkāryavāda* (pre-existence of the effect in the cause).

The emphasis is definitely placed on the cosmic side of the doctrine.⁹⁷ That means that the “general” process of creation and dissolution is tacitly admitted to be the only objective one, while the “personal” creation and dissolution is considered to be metaphorical, or at least secondary. This, again, leads to the conception of a cosmic *buddhi*, which, even before the production of the ego, is in process of being divided into the innumerable individual *buddhis* (cf. III. 9–10). When a particular *puruṣa* attains liberation, it is just an insignificant episode, as compared with the ageless process of *prakṛti*, in which an infinity of other *puruṣas* remains caught (I. 159).

Finally, some passages may be quoted from SS book IV in order to characterize the examples and parables contained in it and the way in which they are explained in the commentaries.

According to IV, 1 knowledge is said to be acquired by instruction “just as in the case of the royal prince.” The narrative added in the commentary runs as follows: A prince, who was born under an unlucky star, had to go into exile. Living among the Śābaras he was only acquainted with the way of living of that wild mountaineer tribe. But when his father died, the ministers had him bring back to the royal residence and informed him that he was no Śābara but a prince. At once he began, as a result of his innate qualities and predispositions, to behave like a royal person. The at first sight incomprehensible *sūtra* IV, 9 “Passion brings about discord in connexion with many (persons), as in the case of the shells of the girl” is explained as follows: When a girl wears a bracelet consisting of many shells these will give a clinking sound when she moves. That is why a certain clever girl removed the shells except one lest the noise of her bracelet should annoy her guests for whom she was pounding rice. According to IV, 11 one will be happy like Piṅgalā when one gives up hope. The explanation given in the commentary is: The hetaira Piṅgalā could not sleep because she was waiting in vain for her beloved. At last, feeling a repugnance for her manner of life, she gave up hoping and could sleep soundly. (For a reference to this story see Mahābhārata 12, 171, 61, 475* cr. ed. or 178, 7f. Bo. ed.).

The above tendencies, still more accentuated, are manifest in Vijñānabhikṣu's Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya. Vijñānabhikṣu appears as the typical syncretist philosopher. He evidently believes that each of the orthodox *darśanas* represents a valuable approach to the ultimate truth. Besides the SPBh., he is also the author of a well-known commentary (Yoga-vārttika) on Vyāsa's Yogabhāṣya and of a less famous commentary on the Brahmasūtra, the Vijñānāmṛta.⁹⁸ It seems that at the time of his literary activity (c. 1550–1600) the Sāṃkhya system had considerably declined. We read in the introductory verses to the SPBh. that:

⁹⁷ See R. GARBE, Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie, op. cit., pp. 220–228. The SS also adopt the purāṇic conception of a periodic re-creation or re-manifestation of the Veda (V. 40–51).

⁹⁸ Edited by M. S. ADKAR, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 8, Benares, 1901.

“The Sāṃkhya doctrine has been devoured by the sun of time and only a tiny crescent of the moon of knowledge is still visible — *kālārkabhakṣitam sāṃkhya-śāstram jñānasudhākaram kalāvaśiṣṭam* —.”⁹⁹

Vijñānabhikṣu’s purpose was to re-establish the authority of the Sāṃkhya system among the other orthodox *darśanas*, to make “the moon of knowledge” once again full.

In his eagerness to accommodate the Sāṃkhya doctrine to the prevalent ideas of his time as well as the traditional Hindu mythology and popular belief, he never hesitates to read his own convictions into the SS. Not only does he follow the SS wherever they are themselves deviating from the genuine Sāṃkhya doctrine, but he also introduces his own views into them, at the very places where their “orthodoxy” is still unquestionable. Being a theist, he is, for instance, at great pains to explain away the very explicit “atheism” of passages like V. 1–10. He generally escapes the difficulty in first giving a word-to-word explanation of such passages and then remarking that they are not to be literally interpreted. For instance:

“We have already explained that such a denial of the (existence of the) Lord is a mere hyperbolic assertion (*prauḍhivādamātram*), the goal of which is to produce indifference towards the attainment of Sovereignty, as well as to stress the possibility of obtaining liberation even without the knowledge of the Lord.”¹⁰⁰

At other places, he refers to the Padmapurāṇa as stating that the atheistic doctrine has been set up by the Lord, in order to prevent evil men from attaining the true knowledge!

In the same manner, he does away with the upanishadic notion of the unicity of *ātman*. After repeating the argument already used in the SS (absence of difference of kind), he adds that this doctrine “merely asserts the absence of separation in space of souls and matter,” an assertion which is quite in accordance with the general Sāṃkhya doctrine of the all-pervasiveness of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, as both Garbe and Keith have remarked. Another salient feature of the SPBh. is its flat denial of the illusory nature of the world as implied in the notion of *māyā*. Vijñānabhikṣu appeals here to “the original Vedānta” which, in his opinion, does teach the reality of the phenomenal world. He refers to texts like Śvetāśvatara-U. IV. 10, which identify *māyā* with *prakṛti*. In this way he apparently succeeds in transforming an atheistic and pluralistic doctrine, like the classical Sāṃkhya, into a sort of theistic Neo-Vedānta.

⁹⁹ Fifth introductory verse to the SPBh., as quoted by R. Garbe, *Die Sāṃkhya-Philosophie*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁰ SPBh. V. 12, ed. R. Garbe, p. 119.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| BEFEO | Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient |
| GBh. | Gauḍapādashāṣya |
| HIL | History of Indian Literature |
| JAOS | Journal of the American Oriental Society |
| JRAS | Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society |
| k. | <i>kārikā</i> |
| SK | Sāṃkhyakārikā |
| SPBh. | Sāṃkhyapravacanabhāṣya |
| SS | Sāṃkhyasūtra(s) |
| STK | Sāṃkhyatatvakaumudī |
| U. | Upaniṣad |
| WZKSO | Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ost-Asiens |
| YD | Yuktidīpikā |
| ZDMG | Zeitung der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft |

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